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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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NP10 8QQ



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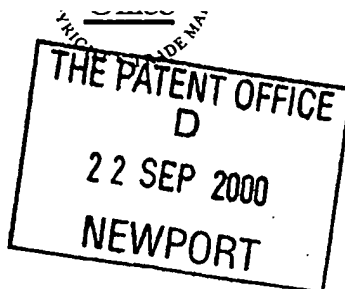
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Dated

28 JUL 2001

Request for grant of a patent

(See the notes on the back of this form. You can also get an explanatory leaflet from the Patent Office to help you fill in this form)



22SEP00 E570452-1 C26047
P01/7700 0.00-0023290.0

The Patent Office

Cardiff Road
Newport
South Wales
NP10 8QQ

1. Your reference

00.PWS

2. Patent application number

(The Patent Office will use this number)

0023290.0

22 SEP 2000

3. Full name, address and postcode of the or of each applicant (underline all surnames)

SMITHS INDUSTRIES PUBLIC LIMITED COMPANY
765 FINCHLEY ROAD
LONDON
NW11 8DS

Patents ADP number (*if you know it*)

~~728708002~~

If the applicant is a corporate body, give the country/state of its incorporation

GB

725705002

4. Title of the invention

ELECTRICAL CONTACTS AND METHODS OF MANUFACTURE

5. Name of your agent (*if you have one*)

"Address for service" in the United Kingdom to which all correspondence should be sent (*including the postcode*)

J. M. FLINT

765 FINCHLEY ROAD
LONDON
NW11 8DS

Patents ADP number (*if you know it*)

1063288002

6. If you are declaring priority from one or more earlier patent applications, give the country and the date of filing of the or of each of these earlier applications and (*if you know it*) the or each application number

Country

Priority application number
(*if you know it*)

Date of filing
(*day / month / year*)

7. If this application is divided or otherwise derived from an earlier UK application, give the number and the filing date of the earlier application

Number of earlier application

Date of filing
(*day / month / year*)

8. Is a statement of inventorship and of right to grant of a patent required in support of this request? (*Answer 'Yes' if:*

- a) any applicant named in part 3 is not an inventor, or
 - b) there is an inventor who is not named as an applicant, or
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YES

Patents Form 1/77

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Continuation sheets of this form

Description 6

Claim(s)

Abstract

Drawing(s) 2 + 10

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Priority documents

Translations of priority documents

Statement of inventorship and right to grant of a patent (Patents Form 7/77)

Request for preliminary examination and search (Patents Form 9/77)

Request for substantive examination (Patents Form 10/77)

Any other documents (please specify)

11.

I/We request the grant of a patent on the basis of this application.

Signature

Date

21/09/00

12. Name and daytime telephone number of person to contact in the United Kingdom

J. M. FLINT

020 8457 8220

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ELECTRICAL CONTACTS AND METHODS OF MANUFACTURE

This invention relates to electrical contacts and methods of manufacture

The invention is more particularly concerned with hyperboloid socket contacts and their manufacture.

Hyperboloid socket contacts have a number of resilient wires extending longitudinally of the socket with opposite ends of the wires displaced with respect to one another through a small angle around the circumference of the socket so that the internal diameter of the passage through the wires midway along the length of the socket is reduced. This forms a resilient contact region for a male pin contact inserted in the socket. Opposite ends of the wires are welded to some form of retaining structure. Typically, a socket might have five wires equally spaced from one another around the circumference of the socket. The contacts are usually made by loading individual wires into respective slots in a cylindrical mandrel, the slots extending along the mandrel at an angle. The mandrel holds the wires in position while their ends are welded to some form of retaining structure. Contacts of this kind are described, for example, in US3023789, US3107966, US3470527, US3557428, US3858962 and US5203813. Hyperboloid contacts are sold by Hypertac Limited of London, England, Hypertronics Inc of Hudson, Mass, USA and Interconnectron GmbH of Deggendorf, Germany.

With reference first to Figure 1, the conventional socket 1 has a number of resilient, metal wires 2 extending along the socket and equally spaced from one another around its circumference. The wires 2 are welded at their ends to respective rings 3 and 4 at opposite ends of the socket 1. The location at which one end of each wire 2 is attached to the forward ring 3 is displaced angularly around the socket from the location at which the opposite end of the wire is attached to the rear ring 4. In this way, the wires 2 have a hyperboloid configuration in which the passage along the socket between the wires reduces in diameter to a minimum midway along the length of the socket. The assembly of the wires 2 and rings 3 and 4 is mounted in a tubular housing (not shown) including some form of terminal to which electrical connection can be made. A male contact 5 inserted in the socket 1 from its forward end makes a sliding contact with the wires 2 in the central region of the socket.

With reference now also to Figures 2 and 3, there is shown a mandrel 10 used in manufacture of the socket 1. The drawing only shows a mandrel for a socket having five wires, for simplicity. The mandrel 10 is in the form of a solid rod of cylindrical shape and circular section. The mandrel has five slots 11 extending along its surface, the slots extending along the length of the mandrel and being inclined at an angle to its axis. The floor of each slot 11 is flat along its length but, because of the angle of the slots, the depth of each slot varies along the length of the mandrel 10, being a maximum midway along its length and reducing towards opposite ends. The depth of the slots 11 midway along the length of the mandrel 10 is such that the floor of the slots lie on a circle 12 in a transverse plane, the diameter of which is equal to the desired diameter of the passage between the wires 2 midway along the length of the socket. The width of each slot 11 is equal to the diameter of a wire 2.

A socket 1 is manufactured by loading five wires 2 into the mandrel 10, one in each slot 11. The wires 2 are straight and, therefore, lie flat on the floor of the slots 11. The mandrel 10 with the loaded wires 2 is then inserted through the rings 3 and 4 or other retaining structure and the wires are welded to the rings. The mandrel 10 is then removed leaving the wires 2 attached at their ends to the rings 3 and 4 and extending in a hyperboloid arrangement.

With reference to Figure 4, there is shown a socket 20 according to the present invention. The socket 20 is substantially the same as that shown in Figure 1 except that it has six wires 21 to 26 and that these are arranged in three groups of two wires each 21 and 22, 23 and 24 and 25, and 26. The wires 21 to 26 in each group extend side-by-side in contact with one another and the three groups of wires are spaced from one another equally around the circumference of the socket 20.

The socket shown in Figure 4 is made using the mandrel 30 shown in Figures 5 and 6. This mandrel 30 is the same as that shown in Figures 2 and 3 except that it has only three slots 31 to 33 and that the width of each slot is equal to twice the diameter of the wires 21 to 26. In this way, two wires 21 and 22, 23 and 24, and 25 and 26 are loaded side-by-side into each slot 31 to 33. Preferably, the two wires are loaded into each slot 31 to 33 at the same time. The wires 21 to 26 are welded to the rings 3' and 4' in the same way as conventionally.

This socket and method of manufacture have several advantages over conventional sockets and methods.

First, by loading more than one wire at a time into each socket, the loading cycle time is reduced. The cycle time for loading six wires by the present invention can be 40% less than that for loading five wires individually, in the conventional manner. The loading operation can also be more reliable where there are a reduced number of loading steps, as in the present invention. By grouping two or more wires together it is possible to manufacture a socket having a greater number of wires without increased manufacturing cost. This brings several advantages. For example, where six wires are used according to the present invention compared with five wires previously, the maximum current for the socket is increased by 20% and the contact resistance is reduced by 20%.

It will be appreciated that the invention is not confined to sockets and mandrels having groups of two wires each but could have three or more wires in each group. The number of groups could also be different from the three groups described.

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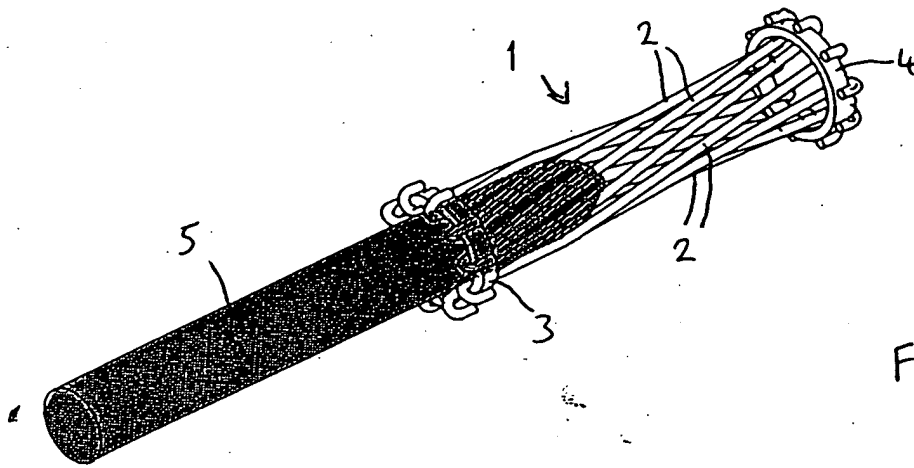


FIG. 1

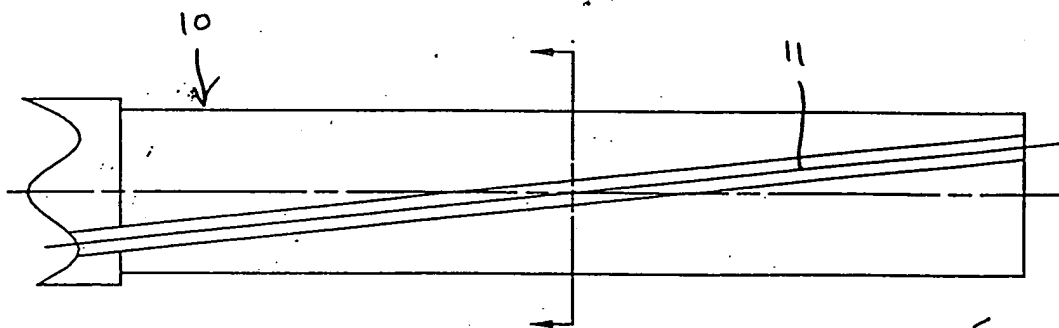


FIG. 2

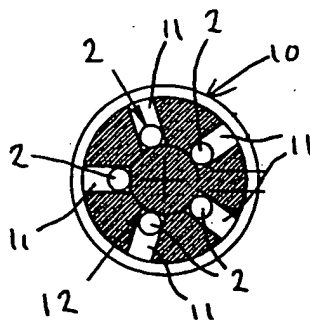


FIG. 3

2/2

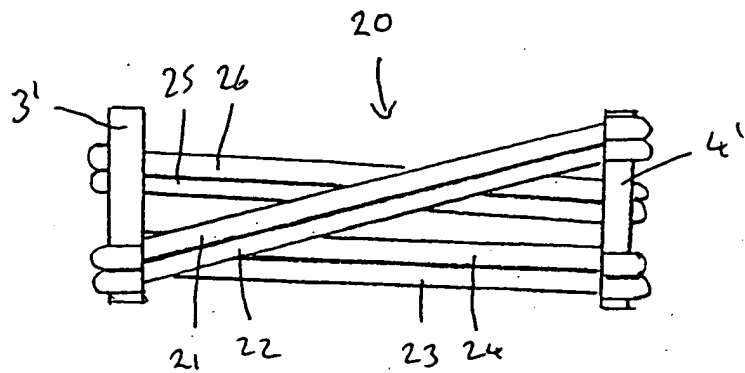


FIG. 4

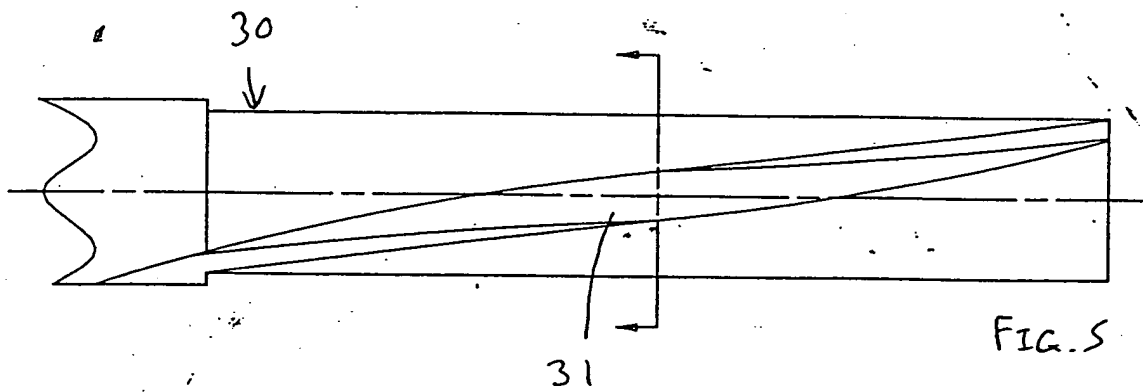


FIG. 5

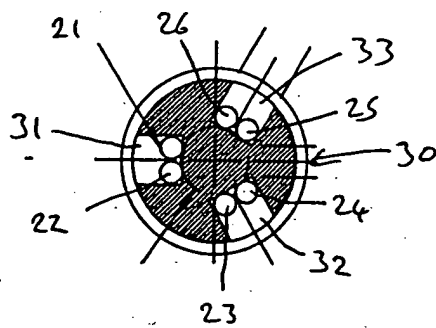


FIG. 6